

Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 039654 TOSEC 040082

FROM PM-STERN ACTING

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:MOPS, PARM

SUBJECT: MBFR - SOVIET COUNTERPROPOSAL

SUMMARY: ON FEB. 17 THE SOVIETS MADE A COUNTERPROPOSAL
ALONG THE LINES FORESHADOWED BY GENERAL SECRETARY BREZHNEV'S
PRESENTATION TO YOU IN MOSCOW. THE NEW PROPOSAL APPEARS TO
BE LITTLE MORE THAN A COSMETIC REORDERING OF THE BASIC
EASTERN POSITION, UTILIZING SOME OF THE NUMBERS FROM THE
WESTERN OPTION III PROPOSAL TO GIVE THE APPEARANCE OF A
SERIOUS COUNTER-OFFER:

-- IT OFFERS A MODEST CONCESSION ON PHASING;

-- IT IS RETROGRADE IN ITS TREATMENT OF EQUIPMENT; AND

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-- IT DISPLAYS NO GIVE ON EITHER NATIONAL SUB-CEILING OR

THE EQUAL PERCENTAGE VERSUS ASSYMETRIC REDUCTIONS ISSUES.

BROAD OUTLINES OF THE COUNTER-PROPOSAL, THE SOVIET DELEGATION INTRODUCED IT INTO AN 'INFORMAL' ON FEB. 17. THE PROPOSAL IN ESSENCE PROVIDES FOR:

-- A FIRST PHASE US AND SOVIET REDUCTION EQUAL TO 2 TO 3 PERCENT OF OVERALL NATO AND WP MANPOWER IN THE REDUCTIONS AREA (APPROXIMATELY 10 PERCENT OF US FORCES IN THE NGA; 5 PERCENT OF SOVIET FORCES);

-- EQUAL NUMBER REDUCTIONS OF SEVERAL EQUIPMENT CATEGORIES: 300 TANKS, 54 NUCLEAR-CAPABLE AIRCRAFT, 36 AIR DEFENSE MISSILES, AN UNSPECIFIED NUMBER OF TACTICAL BALLISTIC MISSILES, AND ARMY CORPS HEADQUARTERS;

-- A FREEZE ON THE FORCES OF OTHER DIRECT PARTICIPANTS IN THE FIRST STAGE TO BE FOLLOWED BY A SECOND STAGE OF REDUCTIONS (IN 1977-78) WHICH WOULD RESULT IN ALL DIRECT PARTICIPANTS REDUCING BY THE SAME PERCENTAGE BY THE END OF PHASE II. (THE SIZE AND TIMING OF PHASE II REDUCTIONS WOULD APPARENTLY BE AGREED AT THE OUTSET.)

-- REDUCTIONS WOULD BE BY UNITS, INCLUDING THEIR EQUIPMENT; AND

-- THE REDUCED US AND SOVIET FORCES WOULD BE DISBANDED.

TO DATE, THE EAST HAS NOT FORMALLY REJECTED THE OPTION III PROPOSAL. INSTEAD, THEY HAVE CHARACTERIZED IT AS CONTAINING POSITIVE ELEMENTS WHICH ARE UNFORTUNATELY LINKED TO THE OVERALL UNACCEPTABLE NATO APPROACH.

PRELIMINARY COMMENTS. ALTHOUGH NUMEROUS QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROPOSAL REMAIN, IT APPEARS TO CONTAIN A MODEST STEP TOWARD THE WESTERN POSITION ON PHASING. IT LINKS THIS PROPOSAL TO THE OVERALL EASTERN REDUCTION PROGRAM OF EQUAL PERCENTAGE REDUCTIONS BY ALL DIRECT PARTICIPANTS RESULTING IN NATIONAL SUB-CEILINGS.

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THE OFFER'S EQUIPMENT PROVISIONS ARE A HALF-STEP BACKWARD-CALLING FOR EQUAL NUMERICAL CUTS AS OPPOSED TO THE EQUAL PERCENTAGE CUTS IMPLICIT IN THEIR ORIGINAL POSITION. MOREOVER, BY INCLUDING AN OFFER OF SOVIET NUCLEAR REDUCTIONS, IT FAILS TO TAKE UP OPTION III'S CENTRAL RATIONALE WHICH CALLS FOR A MIXED PACKAGE TRADE. US AND SOVIET NUCLEAR REDUCTIONS ARE CALLED FOR IN BOTH PHASES, AND ALL PARTICIPANTS MUST REDUCE EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING NUCLEAR

DELIVERY SYSTEMS IN PHASE II. THE PROPOSAL TO DISBAND
WITHDRAWN FORCES IS A NEW ELEMENT WHICH MAY BE PARTIALLY
DESIGNED TO MEET WESTERN ARGUMENTS ON THE GEOGRAPHIC
DISPARITY.

OVERALL, THE TWO SIDES ARE NOW IN SOMEWHAT ANALOGOUS

SITUATIONS WITH RESPECT TO THIS OFFER AND TO OPTION III.
EACH SIDE HAS NOW TABLED A PROPOSAL CONTAINING SOME
MEASURE OF CONCESSION. HOWEVER, THESE CONCESSIONS ARE
FIRMLY EMBEDDED IN THE OVERALL APPROACHES OF THE RESPEC-
TIVE SIDES WHICH ARE FAR APART.

INITIAL WESTERN REACTION IN VIENNA TO THE PROPOSAL HAS
BEEN QUITE GUARDED, BEING CONFINED TO A FEW QUESTIONS AND
A PROMISE TO STUDY THE PROPOSAL. WESTERN NEGOTIATORS
RENEWED THEIR STRESS ON OPTION III'S IMPORTANCE. THEY WILL
ALSO ATTEMPT TO USE THE NEW PROPOSAL TO BUTTRESS WESTERN
DEMANDS FOR DATA.

INTERAGENCY WORK IN WASHINGTON IS PROCEEDING ON HOW TO
DEAL WITH THE WP OFFER. NATO WILL ALSO BE
ADDRESSING THIS SUBJECT. INGERSOLL

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